

Finnish Fuck Games: A Lost Historical Footnote

Histories of media technologies involve diverse experimentations with erotic, pornographic, and sexually explicit content. Sexual content was adopted early in photography as it was in visual variations such as the stereoscope, 16mm, 8mm and 35mm film and video – and, later, in networked media from Usenet to the WWW (e.g., Williams 1989; Coopersmith 1999; Paasonen 2018a). The videogame is no exception. While the role of erotic, pornographic, and sexually explicit early videogame development has been cited by historians earlier (often in passing), few case studies chart region-specific functions and roles of such titles. In this article, we do exactly that: our goal is to analyze the independently developed Finnish “fuck games” – playable software typically implying or simulating sexual intercourse – in the 1980s and 1990s in order to identify their fundamental elements as objects produced in specific regional space and time. While these elements can thus be claimed to reflect Finland’s computer and media culture during the era, they also provide a perspective from which to better understand the overall development and history of local, pre-internet DIY labor within game design.

We use the marker of “fuck games” to capture some of the material’s specific style and mode. Made by young people for other young people in a male homosocial context, the games are hardly “adult”. To call them erotic would be inaccurate in that they exhibit little aesthetic or artistic intent, they are not concerned with depictions of desire and it is not obviously the case that their intention is to sexually arouse. This is also why we have chosen not to label the games as pornographic (additionally, they display little familiarity with the generic conventions or aesthetics of pornography). These are “sex games” made with the intention to amuse, intentionally rude and crass, and deserving of a moniker descriptive of this. Fuck games were created by amateurs, shared as free copies irrespective of copyright, and enjoyed as vernacular male teen entertainment where joy is taken in grossness, coarseness and raunch.

Our study is methodologically specific, and hence by default limited. On the one hand, there is evidence that non-commercial fuck games were widely popular among the hobbyists of the time due to active distribution within software piracy networks. They were however all mainly ignored by the press and triggered few public discussions (see Saarikoski 2005). On the other hand, while contemporary archivists and collectors have managed to track down hundreds of such titles, only a selected few are currently available for (emulated) play: most are believed to have been completely destroyed (see Kauppinen 2015). Given the impossibility to chart the whole range of fuck-games produced in Finland, we approach the phenomenon qualitatively, by analyzing four widely available titles as well as their paratexts: *Strip-tease Ventti*, *Helttää Helmaan*, *Bepa Quest*, and *Koulu3*. We do not claim that these titles characterize or encapsulate the overall fuck game scene of the era, nor do we have the means to expand our inquiry to comparative research on an international scale. Rather, we employ their diverse means to act and interact (in various representational contexts) as regional evidence for the argument that – as it has historically been the case with other media technologies – sex served as a creative space for both the development and play of early videogames.

First, we summarize the history of previous fuck and sex games in order to set our analysis in the continuum of international development. This is followed by an introduction of the named titles and their mechanics, representations, and media references. We conclude with a discussion that analyzes these fuck games in the context of pornography and game design in 1980s and 1990s Finland.

History of Fuck Games

While sex and sexuality have been examined in gaming cultures at least since the beginning of the 1980s (e.g., Kaplan & Kaplan 1983), research on fuck games is somewhat limited. Systematic references to actual developed titles are currently found in historical anthologies; for instance, already JC Herz's *Joystick Nation* (1997) discusses the infamous *Custer's Revenge* (1982), remembered for its rape content. According to Herz, it "fails abysmally as a videogame" yet spawned "two sequels despite the protests and Atari's efforts to halt production" (69). Dominic Arsenault's (2008, 279) review of gaming controversies likewise starts with *Custer's Revenge*, yet he expands analysis to sex-themed classic adventures that, at the arrival of full-motion video technology in the 1990s, evolved into "adult interactive entertainment" with human actors in titles such as *Riana Rouge* (1997) and *Michael Ninn's Latex* (1998). Along similar lines, Tristan Donovan's *Replay: The History of Videogames* (2010) visits the topic in passing by unfolding *Night Life* (1982) as the origin of the so-called "bishōjo games," i.e. Japanese-styled videogames with young girl characters as their main selling point.

At the time of writing, perhaps the most comprehensive and unique study of fuck games is Brenda Brathwaite's less academic book-length scrutiny, *Sex in Videogames* (2006). Her review includes dozens of forgotten titles over the past three decades, ranging from small indie productions (*Quest for the Whorehouse Queen*, no year) to major brand titles (*Playboy: The Mansion* 2005) and massive multiplayer online games (*Naughty America: The Game* 2006). While Brathwaite's data is extensive and her personal observations as a developer insightful, she provides little, if any, social, technical, or other analysis that could be used as a reference to understand the role of fuck games across cultures (see Harrer 2019).

In addition to the above, the said bishōjo games and Japanese erotic videogame design in general ("eroge") are currently gaining academic attention, primarily in the work of Patrick Galbraith (e.g. 2017a; 2017b) and a number of scholars in Japan (e.g. Saito 2000; Azuma 2001). In studies of law and videogame regulation, controversial releases are occasionally brought up as historical curiosities (e.g., Kenyota 2008; Wilcox 2011; see also Kangasvuo & Meriläinen 2009; Payne & Alilunas 2016). Finally, there is some ongoing research on the sexual content in early console games and their censorship (see Wysocki & Lauteria 2015). For an overall review of sex and sexuality, the reader is guided to a study by JT Harviainen and his colleagues (2018). In the rubric of this overview, Finnish fuck games provide a distinct historical entry to a sector of the phenomenon that has remained relatively unexplored so far. Being noncommercially developed by anonymous designers and distributed in the regionally and temporally specific Nordic Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, the selected titles help us understand better what erotic, pornographic, and sexually explicit digital play was like and how it served the culture of the time.

Material and Analysis

The present analysis is based on playing, reading, and situating the publicly available versions of *Strip-tease Ventti*, *Helttää Helmaan*, *Bepa Quest*, and *Koulu3* in the time of their release, that is, we employ historically aware hermeneutic play research as a method (Karhulahti 2015). We cannot confirm the titles' years of publication, but a number of sources, to be discussed later, suggest their origin to be in the 1980s and 1990s. The rationale for choosing these early fuck games is their accessibility and popularity: as Commodore64 and MS-DOS products, they can be accurately emulated in contemporary computers and (perhaps due to this) are often mentioned in ongoing online discussions and articles that

deal with the history of fuck games in Finland (e.g. MoonTV 2015; Airola 2016; see also Kerttula 2013). Again, we are aware and stress that these instances do not necessarily represent the complete scene of the 1980s-1990s era; however, as known examples of that scene, they enable us to start analyzing the ways in which erotic, pornographic, and sexual elements were designed by amateur videogame makers.

While each of these fuck games was played through multiple times until reaching a point of implied closure, we did not exert systematic software analysis that would have enabled exploring every piece of their potential content. In this regard, our study represents something of a standard user experience. The fourth title, *Koulu3*, makes an exception, as the playable file was opened and closely scrutinized with the help of a research assistant (Figure 1). This enabled us to gain deeper access to *Koulu3* in particular, and slightly more space is therefore dedicated to it. Paratexts related to these fuck games were studied as well. We consulted local historians and journalists from our personal networks (via snowballing) in order to locate references to the selected and related titles in popular Finnish computer magazines of the time, yet we did not examine the magazines systematically ourselves. Additionally, internet search engines were used in order to map out the currently available online sources concerning each title. Since our study is first and foremost a qualitative contextualized analysis of the fuck games and the paratexts are used merely as supporting reference, we do not provide a systematic breakdown or details concerning these media items. Next, the four titles are introduced respectively.

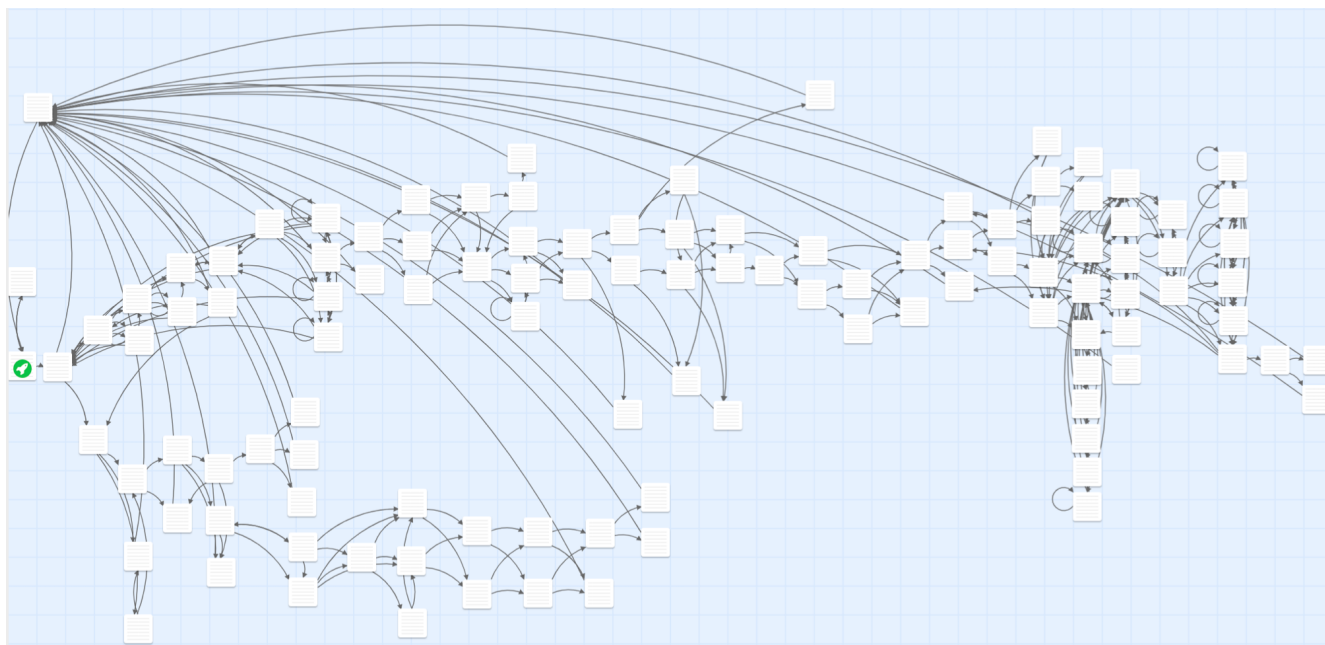


Figure 1. *Koulu3* hypertext map, including all accessible nodes and paths.

Strip-tease Ventti (“Striptease Blackjack”)

The first of our fuck games is not technically speaking part of the genre at all, as it is a somewhat straightforward Commodore64 reproduction of the commercial digital strip poker that were being sold and excessively (and illegally) distributed in the 1980s and 1990s. The basic idea of the digital strip poker is simply to play with virtual characters, and winning leads to the loser undressing one or more pieces of clothing. Most of the current online sources date *Strip-tease Ventti* to the year 1995, and if

this is true, the work can be considered modest for its time in terms of graphical representation. This suggests that the title was neither developed nor played for the purposes of sexual arousal as such, but rather for amusement of merging a sexually titillating theme to a technological ludic experience.

A number of features distinguish *Strip-tease Ventti* from its international peers. Most visibly, the videogame does not simulate poker, as do the majority of erotic digital card games of the time, but rather the game of “Ventti” – a Finnish translation or version of what is elsewhere known as either “Blackjack,” “Twenty-one,” or “Vingt-Un” (cf. Parlett 1991). While the rules between versions of this game vary, Twenty-one is often considered the historical “first” that originated in Europe and thence developed into Vingt-Un in France and spread to the US as Blackjack. Compared to Blackjack, for instance, Finnish Ventti has a slightly different ruleset for calculating points and the cards are not played face down but openly. This regional element has no impact on the title’s erotic theme to any notable degree; however, some other design choices such as excluding the “double stakes” rule (which would normally grant double winnings in case of scoring 21) have been made to simplify the undressing process.

A significant feature that is lacking from many digital strip card games of the 1980s and 1990s is *Strip-tease Ventti* providing its player the option to choose either a male or female character, both of which are simultaneously visible on the screen. Introduced as Olli (male) and Ulla (female), the two characters function as gendered objects of undressing that players may either play with or against (Figure 2). Notably, since the rules of the game make losing by purpose somewhat easy, players can literally choose the character they wish to undress by losing their clothes intentionally with little risk of winning. As noted by Spanish card game historians (Poker Listings 2019), among the immense number of popular titles like *Samantha Fox Strip Poker* (1986) and *Sexy Poker* (2009) that saw a release also for the kids-oriented Nintendo Wii platform, *Strip-tease Ventti* remains one of the few titles in history that includes both female and male characters equally represented and undressed, depending on the player’s own choice.



Figure 2. Strip-tease Ventti. [That's ok, I am Ulla.]

***Helttäa Helmaan* (“Egg”)**

Also designed for Commodore64, *Helttäa Helmaan* reminds one of a classic arcade game such as *Space Invaders* (1978) and *Galaxian* (1979). Nevertheless, instead of a spaceship, the player is in control of a giant penis (named Kyrpa-Kari i.e. “Kari the Dick”) with the goal to maintain erection and – instead of shooting aliens – hitting and penetrating diverse orifices until the level of arousal drains off. The title’s time of release differs depending on the source, most referencing a year between 1985 and 1988. This fuck game is also signed by an artist, “The Incredible Mr. Eggman”, which links to the product’s English subtitle, *The Egg*. This is either an intentional or unintentional pun of literally translating the Finnish word “muna” that refers diversely to a testicle, a penis, and an egg.

Helttäa Helmaan follows conventionally the stereotypes of gaming avatars by providing the player with a somewhat masculine male character to control (see Ivory 2006; Miller & Summers 2007). In comparison to these stereotypes, Kari is also very much sexualized and not merely in a heteronormative vein. The objectives of his penetrating efforts are threefold – Marjut Pieni Herkkusuu (“Marjut the Epicure”, Figure 3), Pillu-Paula (“Paula the Pussy”), Anaali-Arto (Arto the Anal) – all representing distinct simulated sexual exchanges of increased precision-based difficulty, in this order. While the level involving anal action with Arto (a common male name in Finland) is positioned as a climax in the end, completing the level does not result in end credits but restarts the process anew, thus offering a potentially infinite fuck loop.



Figure 3. *Helttaa Helmaan (the Egg)*. Erection % and the number of orgasms at the top.

Bepa Quest (“Butt Quest”)

As above, *Bepa Quest* sets the player in control of a penis, yet this time with a complete male body. Unlike *Helttaa Helmaan*, this MS-DOS fuck game involves no precision-based challenge but simply asks the player to hit button(s) as rapidly as possible in order to “fuck through” a number of objects before the timer runs out. These objects are given various labels from animals (“guinea pig”) and fruits (“peach”, Figure 3) to human names; however, they are all visually presented in the exact same way as semicircles on the side of the screen. In other words, the player’s button mashing efforts are rewarded merely by access to new textual labels, whilst the activity and its visual representation remains the same.

Compared to other fuck games of the time, *Bepa Quest* is exceptional for multiple reasons. First, it was developed by a group of designers known as Åkesoft that produced more than a dozen controversial freeware titles, some of which are nowadays a documented part of Finnish videogame history (Kultima & Peltokangas 2017). While many of Åkesoft’s products provoked controversies – e.g. the largest local computer magazine *Mikrobitti* (1995) featured their videogame *Invataxi* and described it as a “sick” parody of the disabled – it was *Bepa Quest* that had the most significant impact. According to later press reports (*Mikrobitti* 1997), *Bepa Quest* had been designed for school bullying purposes to specifically harass a person whose phone number was given as the ultimate reward for finishing all levels. This led to a lawsuit against the fuck game’s two 15-year-old designers, thus shutting down Åkesoft in 1996.

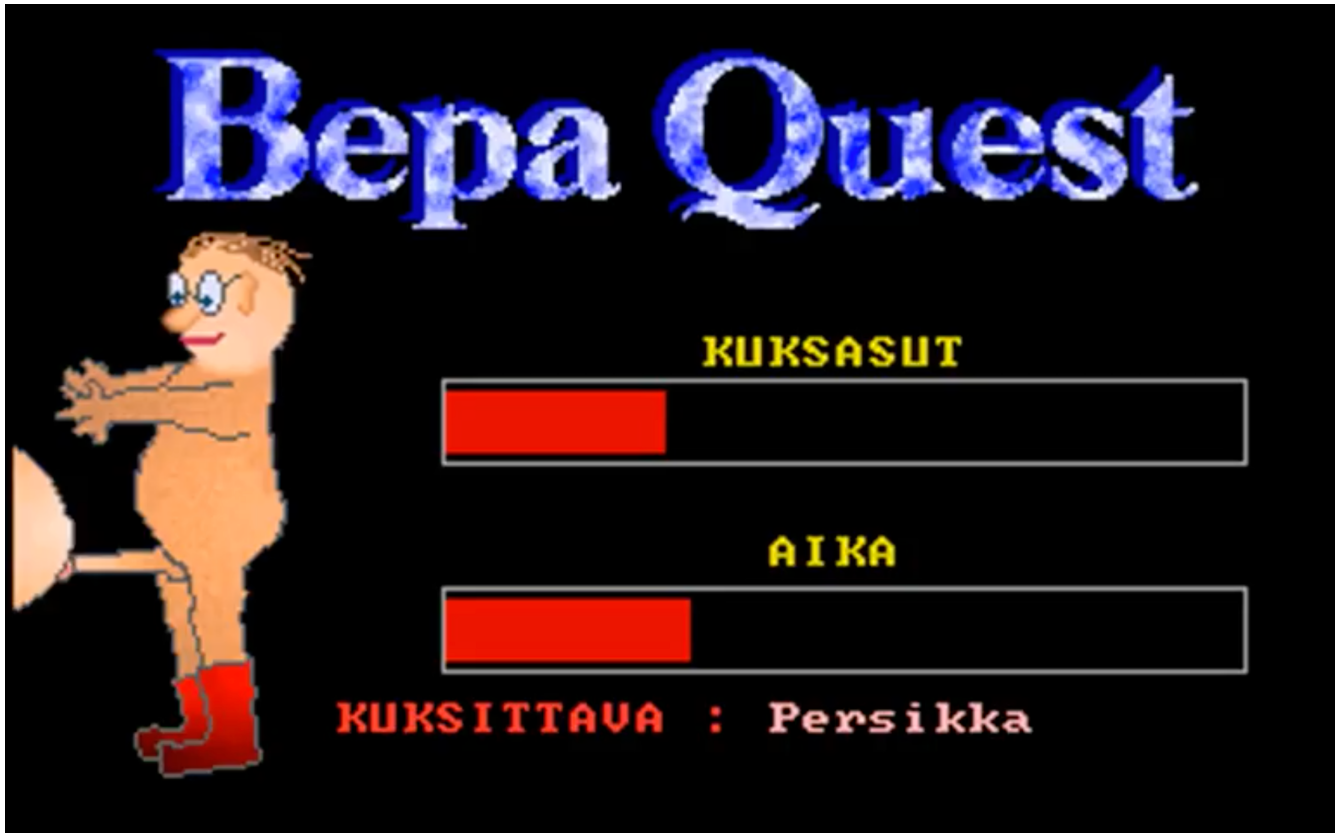


Figure 4. *Bepa Quest*. Upper meter for “fucks” and the lower one for “time”, the name of the object at the bottom (“Peach”).

***Koulu3* (“School 3”)**

Perhaps the most unique of the four titles examined here is *Koulu3*, a text-only choose-your-own-adventure where selecting right actions moves the story onwards and rewards the player with dynamic “sex” and “people killed” scores. As above, the designer(s) of this MS-DOS product are generally unknown. The opening screen mentions “Strider Production” as the developer, yet no other products are known to have been developed under the same name. Regardless of the number three in the title, *Koulu3* has no documented predecessors. Sources consistently reference the year 1993 as its release date, which may be a partial reason for the titled number.

While sex-themed text games have been developed at least since Sierra’s commercial *Softporn Adventure* (1981) – which soon spawned the popular *Leisure Suite Larry* series – *Koulu3* differs from this genre in two major respects. First, instead of employing the standard text parser interface that was a default at the time (see Montfort 2005), its mechanics are simplified into a static choosing of verbally described prewritten actions. In order to make progress, the reader must pick one of the two, three, or four lines that move the story forward. Second, *Koulu3* is not simply about sex but rather something a gore-rich parody of violence and sexual exaggeration. The reader embodies a male avatar in a primary school setting next to two female-coded characters, Jaana and Kati, with whom one can interact in multiple sexual, violent, and other ways.

Most of the available choices in *Koulu3* result in absurd outcomes such as Jaana dying during intercourse due to lack of foreplay, the avatar being kicked to death (internal genital bleeding) by Kati if she is approached directly, or the avatar starving to death after getting his feet stuck in Kati’s “pussy

hole” while jumping on her. Such incidents emerge in a rather surprising manner, as the descriptions of available actions rarely imply anything about the outcome. In addition to Jaana and Kati, a third significant object of play in *Koulu3* is the school cafeteria that allows choosing various mass shooting options. The reader may choose for the avatar to pick a machine gun (that someone left under the table) and start shooting teachers and students – perhaps a reference to the first school shootings in Finland (1989) just before *Koulu3*’s assumed release. In the same way as the choices related to Jaana and Kati affect the “sex score,” the choices related to the shooting affect the “people killed score” (Figure 5). While some actions such as foreplay seem to increase the sex score, there is no clear formula or logic for score accumulation and sometimes the same choices produce different scores.

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You are dead! Pissed off? Try some other strategy...
I mean it could work... You managed to kill (T/L Note: Random number between 2-100. More info in the
Read Me-file.) people during the game! you're quite the wild guy!

Your SEXy score is (T/L Note: Number can be anything. More info in the Read Me-file.) points... Enjoy!

SEX = 10- You have no idea how to hendle a WOMAN at all, HOMO!
SEX = 10-30 You at least KNOW what a woman is!
SEX = 30-60 You know a FEW nice TRICKS for a woman...Thats it...
SEX = 60-80 A woman is like a machine to you! You use her like a MACHINE!
SEX = 80-100 You know how to give proper pleasure to yourself & your partners.
SEX = 100-110 You know how to fuck a woman ALREADY! You make a woman feel good!
SEX = 110+ AREN'T YOU THE STUD! You drive women crazy with pleasure!

- Means LESS, and + means more...
Score from a normal JAANA part is 1-110, BUT they can be more!

Thanks for playing this STRIDER product

Try again?
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Figure 5. *Koulu3*. An English translated version of the fuck game by [removed for peer review].

Fuck Games in Context

Fuck games emerged in a pornographic landscape dominated by locally produced, broadly available print magazines. Following the Finnish 1987 “video nasties” law, VHS tapes featuring adult content could no longer be legally sold in the country, yet they were widely purchased through mail order from Sweden, and remained in local circulation. While the gradual increase in net connectivity in the course of the 1990s drastically altered this landscape both in terms of the general availability of pornography and the visibility of amateur content, sexually explicit DIY photographs, erotic stories and occasional drawings were, during the period discussed, circulated primarily in locally produced magazines (see Paasonen et al. 2015). Given the strict regulation in the distribution of audiovisual pornography, local commercial production moved from print to video only around the new millennium, remaining highly modest in scale. Although small-scale independent enterprises did produce audiovisual content in the 1980s and 1990s, their clandestine productions were not easy to access and, similarly to amateur porn, remain undocumented to date.

Fuck games are connected to pornography as a field of cultural production, yet in ambiguous ways. While it is not in all cases possible to identify the creators of these games, extant knowledge – as well as the aesthetics of the games themselves – points to hobbyist, male homosocial production practices, often among teenage boys. It thus follows that fuck games had little, if anything, to do with commercial porn production in the country: the producers were different, as were the media, forms of distribution and consumption. Some porn aesthetics trickled into, and were appropriated in the games designed, yet their function was not unequivocally that of sexual titillation, nor were the games predominantly produced as masturbation aids – this, again, being a key *raison d'être* for pornographic objects. Fuck games are rather parts of a vernacular DIY porn culture existing at the margins of popular culture historiography as drawings and stories crafted for one's own pleasure and, in some contexts, for the pleasure of being shared with others, as in readers' letters published in porn magazines (see Paasonen 2018b). Such hobbyist porn draws from the imageries and scenarios of commercial pornography while also incorporating a range of other cultural references and personal fantasies into the mix.

Fuck games further belong to a broader hobbyist microcomputing culture clustered in Finland around the *Mikrobitti* magazine which, while not entirely exclusively male, was certainly male-dominated (see Saarikoski 2005; Suominen 2011). Produced in the 1980s and 1990s, fuck games predate the emergence of game industry in Finland, and in the Nordic countries more broadly, which emerged from computing subculture and demoscene to formal companies and professional game design in the course of the 1990s (Jørgensen, Sandqvist & Sotamaa 2017; Saarikoski & Suominen 2009; Tyni & Sotamaa 2017). As part of the demoscene and vernacular pornographic culture alike, fuck games expanded the possibilities of hobbyist sexual representation, exploration and titillation from text, photography and video to the realm of gameplay, allowing for novel trajectories of experimentation and experience. They can be contextualized within this male homosocial realm of hobbyist game design as products intended to entertain and to catch attention among a peer group.

As is obvious from our analysis of *Koulu3* in particular, the gendered dynamics of fuck games were not of the progressive kind as many of the games were steeped in regressive, juvenile male humor where female bodies functioned as objects of both sexual titillation and grotesque sexual violence and where avatars tended to come with, or be, a penis by default. Despite irreverence towards the boundaries of heterosexuality in the possibilities to undress people of varying genders in *Strip-tease Ventti*, to engage in anal adventures with Arto in *Helttää Helmaan*, or to penetrate flora and fauna in *Bepaquest*, it would take a great stretch of analytical imagination to identify these games as queer in the sense of breaking against, critiquing, or providing alternatives for gendered and sexual norms. Rather, play with male-on-male anal play can be conceptualized as that which Jane Ward (2015), in the US context, examines as straight white male fascination with the bodies of other men involving “gross-out” fascination with anuses and the uses of homosexual sex to humiliate and demean one another, not least under the blanket of humor. Both contextual investigation and analysis of fuck games themselves makes evident the centrality of male homosociability in their creation and circulation. Here, the pleasures of hobbyist computing within the demoscene meet the pleasures of humor and the titillations of sexual content playing with the conventions of porn.

Conclusions

The four Finnish pornographic videogames from the 1980s and 1990s – at least three of which can be labelled fuck games due to their diverse simulations of sexual intercourse – allow for a number of tentative implications concerning two cultural industries of the region, porn and videogames. First,

while the titles' mechanical diversity is well reflective of the explorative tendencies in the era's hacker culture, the verbal and visual representations are somewhat unsurprising in the context of the male-dominant computer/gamer rhetoric of the time (see Kirkpatrick 2015). That said, none of the fuck games can be classified as straightforward heteromale fantasy simulators akin to many of their commercial peers, but they rather employ pornography as an object of parody and dark play. That is, the games play with pornography whereas they can be classified as pornography only with some difficulty.

Fuck games were developed as tools for school bullying as they were as instruments of entertainment with a distinctly male homosocial, juvenile bent. They can be seen as predecessors of user-generated online miscellanea as it is currently exchanged on online platforms under content markers such as "NSFW" or "sexually explicit," regularly in combination with humor. In contrast to spatially confined demoscenes and the limited circulation that the fuck games of the 1980s and 1990s achieved via floppy disks and dial-up modem connections, current creations spread horizontally in homosocial networks, whether these be linguistically specific (as was the case with the games examined in this chapter) or open to international circulation and appropriation. Such miscellanea mainly fails to enter commercial publishing, serving a social function instead in bringing people together through shared cultural objects. That these objects are regularly rife with sexist and misogynistic overtones, again, speaks of the shape that this sociability takes and the political reverberations that it may have in terms of game cultures more broadly.

Low-tech and banal as the fuck games examined in this chapter may be, examinations thereof can help to broaden media historical understanding in a number of ways, from perceptions of game cultures to vernacular porn historiography and their entanglement with ways of doing gender and sexuality in the years preceding professional game design in the country. In the lack of previous or comparative fuck game research, we cannot claim the Finnish scene to be either unique or typical. More research on DIY fuck games in different parts of the world is needed for drawing a more holistic picture of how the genre has developed, what it encompasses, how it relates to commercial sex game design, how it relates to local pornographic cultures, and what the impact of fuck game culture has been on the videogame industry more generally.

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